

Natural News

Weekly Staff Newsletter
December 8, 2000

Secret Fears of a Field Museum Santa Claus

By Mark Schmeltzer

There was a tense moment at the top of the south stairs in Stanley Field Hall last Wednesday. A platoon of ballerinas, arms gracefully outstretched, framed the empty space where Santa Claus was supposed to have made his grand debut. But Santa was still offstage, adjusting his beard and his wig, which, due to their having been "Febreezed" the night before, made his head smell like it had just popped out of the dryer. Santa was also wrestling with self-doubt. "Who am I kidding?" he said to himself. "I'm not Santa Claus." He feared that no matter how spirited his performance, he would meet a great big marble room, chilled bone-cold by the air of silence and skepticism. He did this gig the year before, so he should have known better. Still, he believed that no kid in this jaded modern world could possibly look upon an idiot in thin red velvet pajamas, whose light-brown eyebrows contrasted with his snow-white hair and beard, and whose black plastic boot-covers did not completely cover his boots and think "Look, it's Santa Claus!" Besides, who even believes in the Kringle these days?

I know that Santa's torment, for you see, this past Wednesday, at the Women's Board Holiday Tea, I was that Santa. Fortunately, the interval between the time I was introduced and the time I breathlessly burst into view added dramatic tension—that prolonged anticipation whose payoff is the essence of showbiz spectacle. The crowd shrieked with elation at my belated entrance. So far, so good.

From the landing at the top of the stairs, I waved both arms wildly to stir the masses on the floor below. As I made my way to the what would be my throne for the evening (a red wooden sleigh) I worked the room, shaking hands, pointing at individual kids in the crowd like I knew them (that hackneyed old politician's ploy).

To my amazement, this giggling sea of Lilliputians and I have become allies. I witnessed no crossing of arms, no tapping of toes, no doubtful scowls. My confidence surged as I realized "they're buying it! They're really buying it!" As I ascended my ersatz chariot, I picked kids from the crowd at random and looked directly into their eyes and waved. Their faces lit up with expressions that said "Hey—Santa just waved

(see *Santa*, page 4)

FIELD NOTES

Week of December 11, 2000

Staff/Volunteer Events

Tae Bo Class

- Monday, 5 p.m., Ground Floor

Aerobics Class

- Tuesday, 5 p.m., Ground Floor
- Thursday, 5 p.m., Ground Floor

Green Sheet Meeting

- Wednesday, 3 p.m., Special Events

Goodbye for Tina Gulley-Augustus, Protection Services

- Thursday, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., Public Services Lounge

Public/Campus Events

Kremlin Gold

- Exhibit Continues

Endurance

- Exhibit continues

Star Wars: The Magic of Myth

- Exhibit continues

The Natural News is published
by the Human Resources
Department.

The deadline for next week's
issue is Wednesday,
December 13, at noon.

Staff News

HONEY TREE Pre-school and Infant Care offers discount to Field Museum Employees!

Looking for great people to look after your kids and save money? We know the importance of quality child care and that is why we have partnered with HONEY TREE, Inc. You can sign up for ongoing child care or last minute back-up care as well. Do you have questions? HONEY TREE representatives will be at the health fair in January to answer them. They will offer a 10% discount to any employee of the Field Museum using their facility. They are located right around the corner at 1325 S. State Street.

Are you interested in checking out the facility? Join us on Monday, December 11 at 5 p.m. for an informal open house and tour with the staff of HONEY TREE. Please call Heather Friend at ext. 7275 if you are interested in attending or if you have any other questions.

To All Museum Staff:

Tina Gulley-Augustus, Administrative Assistant for the Department of Protection Services, will be leaving The Field Museum after 15 years of service. Tina, who recently completed her Bachelor's degree from Roosevelt University, will be working for a community service organization in a management capacity.

Please join us in wishing Tina well in her new pursuits on Thursday, December 14th at 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. in the Public Services Lounge. Beverages and sweets will be served.

Submitted by **Jeff Hawkins**

Sloth Nearly Reduced At Field Museum

Last week a broken pane of glass was found hanging above our sloth bear diorama in the Hall of Asian Mammals. The Field Museum Exhibits staff did an incredible and heroic job of staving off an impending disaster which could have resulted in the beheading of the biggest bear in the exhibit.

Ideas and actions from **Pam Gaible, Ashley Golden, Bruce Heimbach, Paula Horecny, Neil Keliher, Ray Leo, David Mendez** and **Donna Tocci** (to name a few) were instrumental in this save and made me proud to be associated with this very professional and dedicated team!

Submitted by **Bill Stanley** (via **John McCarter**)

On Wednesday December 13, 2000, there will be NO parking at the North lot due to an event at the Shedd Aquarium. Staff and volunteers may park at the East Soldier Field lot.

If you have any questions, call the Public Services office at ext. 7911.

Submitted by **Jacqueline Benitez**

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

FM lichenologists acknowledged at national and international scientific meetings

The Field Museum lichenologists have had a busy year. The five members of the lichenology group (Dept. of Botany), **Jutta Buschbom**, **Valerie Reeb**, **Jolanta Miadlikowska**, **Stefan Zoller**, and **François Lutzoni** were first authors or co-authors on 14 scientific presentations presented at one international and three national meetings in 2000.

At the Mycological Society of America annual meeting, Jutta Buschbom (fourth year Ph.D. student at University of Chicago, CEB/FM) received the MSA Graduate Student Award. This is one of two awards given annually to the two most promising graduate students in mycology based on scholastic merit, research ability, and promise shown as a mycologist. Jutta also received the Karling award from the Botanical Society of America for the quality of her research proposal for her Ph.D. Valerie Reeb (third year Ph.D. student at the University of Illinois at Chicago/FM) was one of the recipients of the Karling award last year at the International Botanical Congress, St. Louis. Jolanta Miadlikowska received the Mason Hale Award at the Fourth Congress of the International Association for Lichenology, Barcelona (Spain) for the best Ph.D. thesis in lichenology. This award is presented only once every four years and candidates are considered only by nomination. François Lutzoni received the George R. Cooley award from the American Society of Plant Taxonomists, for the best contributed paper in plant systematics presented at the Botany 2000 meeting, Portland, Oregon.

The molecular work carried out for all these presentations, which was acknowledged by these awards, was conducted in the Pritzker Laboratory of Molecular Systematics and Evolution at The Field Museum.

MUSEUM CAMPUS CHICAGO

* The weekly Museum Campus Operations meetings for the month of December will be held on:

Monday, 12/11, 3:00 p.m. Shedd Aquarium (meet in foyer of Soundings Restaurant)

Monday, 12/18, 3:00 p.m. Shedd Aquarium (meet in foyer of Soundings Restaurant)

No meetings will be held on Monday, 12/25 or Monday, 1/1/01

* Trolley Ridership for Thanksgiving Holiday (Thursday, 11/23 - Sunday, 11/26):

Museum Campus 7,127

Michigan Avenue (Campus to Navy Pier) 5,501

* We are in the process of collecting 2001 museum event information (exhibition openings, museum-hosted events with guest attendance of 300+, etc.) for the 2001 City of Chicago Event Calendar. If your department is planning events for 2001, please fax a list of events (with estimated attendance and contact person) to the Museum Campus office (fax 312-665-7427). The events list from the Field, Adler and Shedd will be compiled, added to the City Calendar and utilized in the planning of traffic management within the Campus, Soldier Field, Grant Park and the central business district.

* The Chicago Park District invites you to run, walk, bike, in-line skate or paddle along our nationally known lakefront. A new lakefront map depicting over 18 miles of lakefront trails and 24 miles of shoreline has just been published and is available through the Museum Campus office (call 312-665-7422). The pocket-sized map is a great addition to a sports or city-related holiday gift!

Submitted by **Christina Breslow**

Pssst...What do you think about In the Field??

In the Field tries, whenever possible, to implement feedback in making it a better magazine. Beginning with the Jan./Feb.2001 issue, I moved the mailing label to the back since many readers wish to frame the stunning covers. It is now slightly smaller so it can fit into your file drawers, and the cover is heavier so it will last longer. *Your Guide to the Field*, the calendar section in the middle, is now a pullout so that readers can keep it in an easily seen, quickly accessible place. And the entire magazine is now printed on recycled paper in soy-based inks—carrying the Museum's conservation ethic to a practical, meaningful level. I will slowly be trying new things throughout 2001.

Please send comments or questions to Amy Cranch at acranch@fmnh.org or ext. 7115.

Submitted by **Amy Cranch**

Santa (cont'd from front page)

at me! This is the best day of my life!"

As the night went on, the kids told me what they wanted for Christmas. I was sure to repeat everything they said in a voice loud enough for their mothers or fathers to hear. I was happy to hear that aside from the Pokemons and the high tech gizmos, kids still generally wish for simple things, like a basketballs and jump ropes and bicycles. I filed this information away in my head as I still have to buy gifts for many nieces and nephews.

Li'l Timmy (his name has been changed here) asked me if I remembered the time we last spoke, two weeks ago at Woodfield Mall. "Um...Oh, yes. Sure Li'l Timmy, I remember." He quizzed me about what he had asked for then. "Uh, oh—look at the camera!" I interjected. "Smile! O.k, Timmy, off you go! Merry Christmas! Ho, ho, ho!" Sustaining the illusion is hard work and it's easy to be caught off guard by a tough question. But ultimately, despite the fact that your beard is attached to your face by a nylon strap, despite the lumpy and unnatural appearance of your big Santa belly, despite the fact that your red winter suit couldn't protect you from temperatures below 55 degrees, let alone the harsh climate of the North Pole—despite all of this, it's still an illusion that can be sustained successfully. All of which may tempt one to ask, "why are children so dumb?"

But they're not dumb. It's just that kids today, like the kids of yesterday, still *want* to believe in magical ideas like Santa Claus. Many were even willing to believe that they were in the presence of Santa Clause last Wednesday evening. And even if that guy in Stanley Field Hall was not the actual St. Nick, they figured that he probably knows him socially. So they behaved themselves just to be on the safe side.

Only YOU can prevent RODENTS

ATTENTION ALL STAFF: THE FIELD MUSEUM HAS BEEN WAGING A WAR AGAINST RODENTS. THE HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENT HAS WORKED TO HUMANELY TRAP AND DISPOSE OF MICE FOUND IN THE BUILDING.

IN NEARLY EVERY INSTANCE OF MOUSE DISCOVERY, FOOD WAS FOUND NEARBY. IT IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT ALL FOOD BE PROPERLY DISPOSED OF AND PUT AWAY.

DO NOT LEAVE FOOD OUT

DO NOT LEAVE FOOD IN YOUR DESK, ON SHELVES, IN FILE CABINETS OR IN CUPBOARDS.

DO PROPERLY DISPOSE OF FOOD IN FREQUENTLY EMPTIED WASTE RECEPTICLES OR CALL HOUSEKEEPING IF YOU HAVE A LARGE AMOUNT OF FOOD THAT NEEDS TO BE TAKEN AWAY. EXTRA TRASH CANS HAVE BEEN PLACED IN THE CORRIDORS.

DO STORE ANY FOOD IN HARD PLASTIC OR METAL CONTAINERS THAT ARE TIGHTLY SEALED.

DO REPORT ANY MOUSE SIGHTINGS TO THE HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENT AT EXTENSION ext. 7923.

Clean Up Week IV is Coming!

Save the Dates—January 8-12, 2001

It's that time of year again to start thinking about your role during CLEAN-UP WEEK. Whether it be as simple as getting those stacks of files off your office floor or, reorganizing labs and workspaces so they can be properly cleaned, it is important that we all participate!

Look for weekly updates in the Natural News!

Baker's Corner



Paul Baker

According to the story I heard, in 1853, railroad magnate Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, while dining at a Saratoga Springs, NY resort, sent his fried potatoes back to the chef, complaining that they were too thick.

The chef that evening was a Native-American named George Crum. Miffed at Vanderbilt's complaint, Crum decided it deserved an appropriate reply. He sliced potatoes paper thin, fried them to a crisp in boiling oil, and salted them. The Commodore loved the "crunch potato slices," as he called them, and the "Saratoga Chips" became a restaurant fad from that day forward.

According to the Snack Food Association (SFA), the international trade association of (salted) crunchy snack manufacturers, potato chips did not become a big seller until 1926 when a Mrs. Scudder invented wax paper bags for the chips at her factory. Every evening, she had women employees take home sheets of waxed paper and iron them into bags. The next day, workers would hand pack chips into the bags, seal the tops with warm irons and deliver them to retailers. Thus, the potato chip bag was born.

So the Crum/Scudder connection was on its way. For several decades after their creation, potato chips were largely a Northern dinner dish. In the 1920s, Herman Lay, a traveling salesman in the South, helped popularize the food from Atlanta to Tennessee. Lay peddled potato chips to Southern grocers out of the trunk of his car, building a business and a name that would become synonymous with the thin, salty snack. Lay's potato chips became the first successfully marketed national brand, and in 1961

Herman Lay (to increase his line of goods) merged his company with Frito, the Dallas-based producer of such snack foods as Fritos Corn Chips®.

Americans today consume more potato chips (and Fritos and French fries) than any other people in the world; a reversal from colonial times, when New Englanders consigned potatoes largely to pigs as fodder and believed that eating the tubers shortened a person's life. Not because potatoes were fried in fat and doused with salt (today's heart and hypertension culprits) but because the spud, in its unadulterated form, supposedly contained an aphrodisiac which led to behavior that was thought to be life shortening. Potatoes of course contain no aphrodisiac (more about the potato later) though potato chips are frequently consumed with passion and are touted by some to be as satisfying as sex.

Nothing really bigger than the "Scudderbag" happened with potato chips from 1926 until 1946 when the first "Potato Chip Queen" was crowned and then in 1949 when the Vincent Lopez Orchestra recorded the song "Potato Chips." No one remembers the name of the first Potato Chip Queen, or for that matter, who Vincent Lopez was.

So, every time you finish eating a bag of chips, look in the bottom and say "Thank you Mr. Crum." Forget Mr. Vanderbilt, all he ever did was eat the first chip. And, oh, if you try to make your own chips, be advised: the potato used for making chips is not the same brand of potato you get at the super market. Special varieties are grown specifically for chips. They are called "chipping" potatoes and have to be specially ordered from the Minnesota, North Dakota, Maine, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, Florida, North Carolina, Alabama, Colorado or maybe Texas.

Pass the peeler, George.



LITUANIAN REPUBLIC AMBASSADA
WASHINGTON

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
WASHINGTON, D.C.

December 4, 2000

Mr. John McCarter
President
The Field Museum
1400 South Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60605-2496

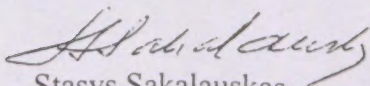
Dear Mr. McCarter:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the wonderful experience that my wife and I had while visiting the Field Museum on November 4, 2000.

During our visit, with Mr. Balzekas, Lithuanian Honorary Consulate, Ms. Paula Ramos, a staff member, and Mrs. Jamison, a volunteer, escorted us through the marvelous exhibits as well gave us insightful information on the distinguished works of the Field Museum.

I would like to personally extend my gratitude to Ms. Ramos and Mrs. Jamison for their remarkable presentation. Thank you once again for the opportunity to visit the Field Museum and I wish you a wonderful holiday season.

Sincerely,


Stasys Sakalauskas
Ambassador

suite 1028
500 North
Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60611
tel 312.661.1028
fax 312.661.1018

December 5, 2000

John W. McCarter
President
The Field Museum of Natural History
1400 S. Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, IL 60605-2496

Dear John,

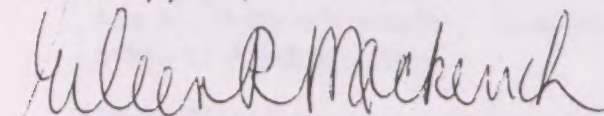
I write to thank The Field Museum for its part in making the eleventh annual Chicago Humanities Festival, NOW!, a resounding success! Our celebration of ideas could never happen without the dedicated effort and creativity of Chicago's cultural institutions and their leaders. We extend our greatest appreciation to you for all you do for us.

I'd also like to thank Janet Young and Steve Hines, whose tireless efforts helped make the weekend of Jelly Roll Morton programming truly special.

I hope the Festival was as exhilarating and rewarding for you as it was for us. We look forward to working with you again on the twelfth annual Festival, Words and Pictures, scheduled for November 1-11, 2001.

Thank you so very much for the commitment to our collaboration.

Sincerely yours,



Eileen R. Mackevich
President and Executive Producer